



ALTERNATE ENDING: PERSONAL HISTORY

Strengths-based choices make a difference

OBJECTIVES

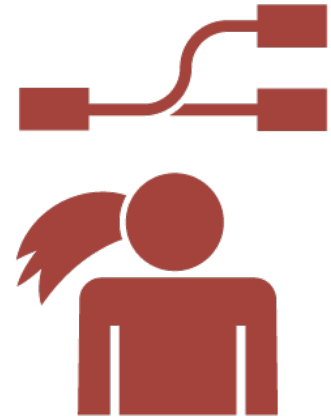
- Students will analyze their personal response to a life challenge
- Students will identify which character strengths they utilized to overcome challenge

MATERIALS

- Alternate Ending handout (one per student)
- Leadership Qualities Handout (several copies for the group or displayed)

TIME

- 20 min



LESSON INTRO

This activity walks students through the process of analyzing their own choices and responses to challenging situations.

Students are asked to infer leadership traits that they exhibited in those responses. Then, students think through an alternate response that they could have chosen based on contrasting characteristics.

LESSON STEP BY STEP

1. Post or print out the Leadership Qualities handout for students to use as a resource during this lesson.
2. Explain to the class that this activity will help them think of how they have responded to challenges in the past.
3. Begin by asking students to think about a challenge that they have encountered that they responded to well—something that they are proud of.

The teacher should prepare to share one of their own personal examples of a challenge as a model for the activity along with the students. You are encouraged to use an example that is suitable and relevant to the student group

4. Pass out the Alternate Ending handout.
5. Walk the students through the flowchart in this order...



- **WHAT WAS YOUR CHALLENGE:** Model for the students a life challenge that you overcame well. Write a short description of your challenge in the appropriate box. This could be something like *“Mother became ill”* or *“Lost a job”*.

Once you share your example, ask students to write in their own personal challenge on their handout.

- **HOW DID YOU RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGE:** Model for the students how you responded to your personal challenge. Write a short description in the appropriate box.

This could be something like *“Visited her 3x a week, organized other family members visiting hours, and made sure she was eating healthy”* or *“Set a schedule to job search for an hour a day, picked up a shift at my daughter’s school”*.

Ask students to write in their own personal example on their handout.

- **CHARACTERISTICS:** Model for the students the 3 positive traits that you used in your response to challenge. This could be something like *“Patience, Optimism, Dedication”*. Write your examples in the characteristics box.

Ask students to write in their own personal examples—point out the Leadership Qualities list as a resource for students to find characteristics that speak to their actions.

- **OPPOSITE CHARACTERISTICS:** Contrast three opposite characteristics that you could have used in an alternate reality. These should be the negative alternates to your three positive characteristics. Something like *“Anger, Blaming, Unresponsive”*.

Ask students to write in their own examples. Emphasize that this is an imaginary exercise. They are thinking in an alternate universe for the next section of the flowchart.

- **RESPONSE WITH OPPOSITE CHARACTERISTICS:** Create a hypothetical reaction that could have happened from those traits. Infer how you could have responded, if you were to use the opposite characteristics that you listed. This might be something like *“Blamed my family for not doing more”* or *“eat ice-cream and complain to my friends”*.

Write your example in, and have students fill in their own chart.

- **NEW OUTCOME WITH OPPOSITE CHARACTERISTICS:** Inferring from your imaginary response, write in the fictional outcome of the challenge. This might be *“My family and I grew resentful of each other”* or *“I did not spend time applying for new jobs or networking and suffered financially”*.

Ask students to write in their own example.

VARIATIONS

You could also try posing the opposite prompt: having students think about a challenging situation they did NOT respond well to. From there, you would go through the same steps, eventually having the students create an alternate ending with 3 positive characteristics and discuss the outcome. This version highlights



the power individuals have to respond differently in a difficult situation and may empower students to respond differently if/when faced with a similar situation in the future.

FACILITATOR TIPS AND NOTES

1. You should walk through the alternate ending organizer yourself—before the session--to come up with a personal example that you can share with your group.
2. Consider sketching out the Alternate Ending graphic organizer onto the whiteboard to guide students through the sheet.
3. Before students engage in this activity, it may be helpful to brief them about how this will be shared with the class.
Decide whether you would like to require your students to share the results of this activity. It may provide powerful moments of depth that lead to accountability and trust-building among your group. However, be cognizant of sustaining a safe atmosphere among your group. Students may not be ready to share at this level. Before students engage in this activity, it may be helpful to brief them about how this will be shared with the class.

REFLECTION & WRAP UP

1. Invite students to share their map if they would like to. Acknowledge the choices they each made to respond positively to a life challenge.
2. Celebrate student's proud moments of overcoming a challenge with a tasty treat and a celebratory feel! Emphasize the skills and strengths that each student brings to difficult times.

NOTES

- **Educational Standards:** CASEL: Self Awareness, P21: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, P21: Initiative and Self Direction, CCRS:SL2 Integrate and Evaluate Information